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ABSTRACT

The Finnish family and day care, the child behavior and growth environment, and the development of day care are discussed in this paper. The Finnish family and day care is discussed in relation to policies regarding the Finnish family, the Finnish day care system, the basis of Finnish day care education, and ecological views in day care education. The child behavior and growth environment is discussed in terms of findings of a study assessing day care in Finland with a view toward improving service quality. Data concern parents' and children's views of day care, and whether day care meets the needs of children and families. The realities of day care from the day care staff's perspective are also considered. Strengths of day care are pointed out. Concluding remarks focus on cooperation between day care and the home, and the need to develop a new social and pedagogical tradition based on the realities of life, the needs of children and families, and the present and future tasks of day care. Included is a figure summarizing the findings of recent evaluative research on the various views of parents and day care personnel about children, education, and educational practices. (RH)

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THE FINNISH DAY CARE SYSTEM AND THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES

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1. THE FINNISH FAMILY AND DAY CARE

1.1 POLICIES REGARDING FINNISH FAMILY

The population of Finland is about five million. Finland's population growth is one of the lowest in the world. There are some 670 000 families with children. Of these, 15% are single parent families. The average family has only 1.7 children due to the fact that nearly half (47%) of all Finnish families only have one child. Only 3% of the families have more than four children. Finnish children start school during the year they turn seven. At this moment there are approximately 450 000 under 7-year-olds. Of these potential day care children 34% are in communal day care. (Sihvo 1988, Children in Finland 1988).

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Most children will experience several different types of day care. This is due to the fact that different types of day care are common in different age groups. Practically all children are cared for by their own parents during the first year of life. This is because when a child is born in Finland the parents are entitled to maternity and parental leave totalling 10.5 months. Of this time, 30 days are alotted before the due date of the baby's arrival. The parents can divide the leave so that the father's share is up to, but no more than 6.5 months. In reality only about 5% of the fathers avail themselves of this opportunity and most take only 12 days off work after their baby's birth. During the parental leave the mothers and fathers are entitled to financial support in the form of maternity and parental allowance. The amounts vary according to personal income. For the first

three months the mother is paid her full salary and from then on usually about 80% of her basic salary. The minimum allowance per day for a person with no income is 52 FM (Finnish marks, 12 USD), which totals about 1300 FM (302 USD) a month. In addition to this every mother receives a maternity grant from the government which can be taken in cash (640 FM, 150 USD in 1989) or in the form of a maternity package. The package contains basic clothing and bedding for the new baby as well as other baby equipment, the total worth of which is more than twice the cash sum. The maternity package provides the first baby an excellent start, and many more experienced mothers also choose it because it is such a good value.

Parents also are entitled to nursing leave, to be absent from their jobs (without losing it) to stay at home to take care of their child until he or she reaches the age of three. No salary is paid, however, during this time. Parents of children under four and children just beginning school are entitled to shorter workdays. They can reduce their workday either from the beginning or the end up to two hours. Usually the length of the workday changes from 8 hours to 6 hours. The loss of one's earnings due to shorter workdays is compensated by-support up to 300 marks (75 USD) a month.

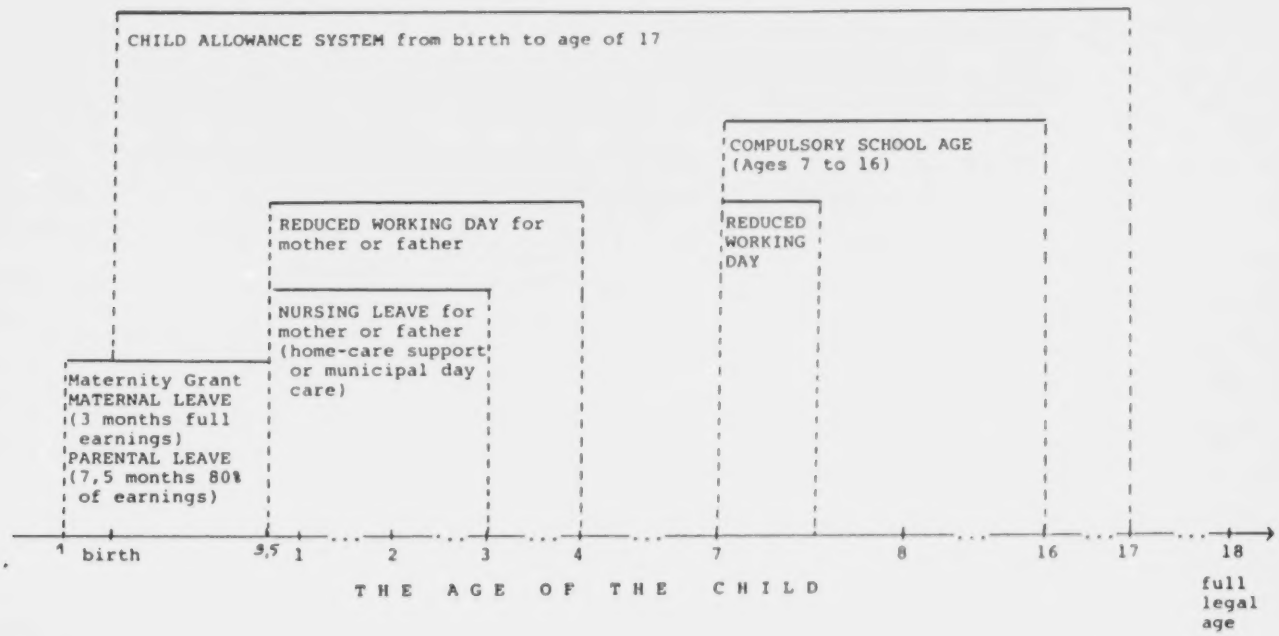
By 1948, Finland had initiated a child allowance system whereby the State paid a subsidy to the parents helping to compensate for the expenses incurred in the raising and caring for of children. Nowadays parents are paid this subsidy until the child turns 17. The amount is worked out according to the number of children in the family: for the first child it is 2616 FM (610 USD) a year and goes up to 6144 FM (1430 USD) for five or more children. There is an extra sum of 1284 FM (300 USD) a year paid to the parents of children under three-years old.

in Finland there has been a notable increase in the number of under three-year-olds cared for at home of late now because of the state support. New legislation regarding home care support (Law 24/1985) makes it possible for parents who have children under the age of three to choose between municipal day care or monetary remuneration, called home care support. The day care legislation of 1973 (Law 36/1973) obliged communes and municipalities to arrange day care to meet the needs of families, but no deadline to achieve this was set.

Now there is a deadline, the beginning of 1990, for all children under the age of three. There have been and will be considerable difficulties in the execution of this new legislation in a number of towns because there is already a notable lack of day care facilities. It seems now that the over three-year-olds may suffer temporarily because room must be made for the under three-year-olds. While no definite provision for over three-year-olds was laid down, the basic principle up to now has been that if a child was entitled to municipal day care he would continue to receive it until he was six.

In next figure there is a summary of the Finnish social support system for families with children (see fig. 1):

FIGURE 1. Finnish support system for families with children.



1.2 THE FINNISH DAY CARE SYSTEM

Last year the Finnish day care system celebrated its first 100 years. The first Finnish kindergarten(preschool) was founded in 1888 for poor working class children in the Helsinki area. Gradually more preschools were established and their functions developed. Finland was the first Scandinavian country to offer day care for children. Even though Finland nowadays has a very extensive preschool and family day care system a large number of children willing to be part of

it are still waiting. (Children in Finland 1988, Sosiaalihallitus 1988).

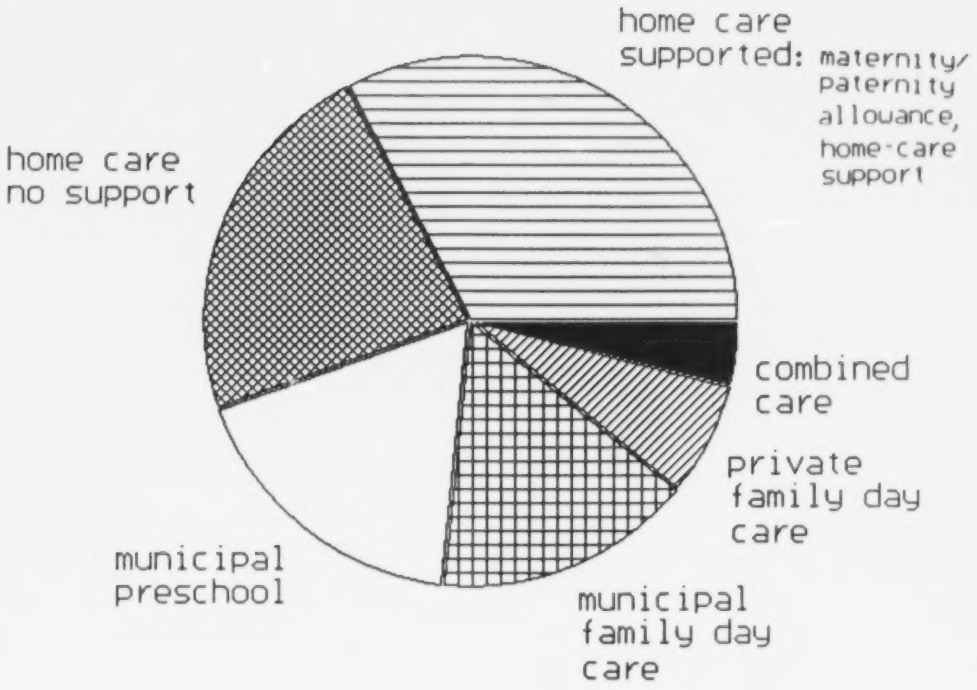
Children's Day Care Act (36/1973) prescribes the day care system's main goal as supporting the home in its child upbringing task as well as working with the home to advance the childrens' balanced development. Historically, the day care system has had two roles:

1. to fulfill the socio-political needs and
2 to fulfill the educational needs.

According to the second article of the Day Care Act, the socio-political duty of the local government is to guarantee "a proper day care arrangement suitable for a child's care and education with continuous care at the time of day it is needed". In other words, day care makes it possible for parents to work, study or be otherwise active outside the home. In Finland the 80% of parents of under school-age children work outside the home. The majority of the mothers work full time, unlike their counterparts in the other Scandinavian countries. Similarly mothers have not availed themselves of new enacted shortened workdays as much as expected. Furthermore, because women's level of education has been constantly rising, it is foreseeable that this will yet increase women's seeking work outside the home in the future.

The educational task of day care is directed at the teaching and education of the child. Day care gives the child long-standing, secure relationships, activities that will foster and support his stage of development, as well as a positive environment for growth. Added to this, the child's individuality is to be emphasized and that the children sometimes come from very different backgrounds is to be taken into account. Preschool aged children, specifically the six-year-olds, are targeted for learning to work together in groups and to acquire the necessary skills which will be required when starting school.

FIGURE 2. Daily care of under school-aged children (%).



1.2.1 The preschool system

Finland has over 2 400 state subsidied municipal preschools. 18% of all under school-age children attend these preschools. In addition to these there are also private preschools, also subsidied by the state and which function to a great extent in ways similar to their municipal counterparts. The following table illustrates the forms current in the Finnish preschool system:

1. STANDARD PRESCHOOLS

Part- and full-time day care:
- 1- to 2-year age groups (12 children/group)
- 3- to 6-year age groups (20 children/group)
- 6-year age preschool groups (25 children)
- sister and brother groups for ages 1 to 6 (15 children)

2. PRESCHOOLS FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

After school activity for first and second-grade students (ages 7 to 8)

3. SPECIAL DAY CARE

A preschool where there are special groups for children who need special care and upbringing (delays or disturbance in physical, cognitive, psychic or social development)

4. OPEN PRESCHOOLS

For children of different ages as well as adults: geared toward upbringing and guidance activity
- especially for home mothers, child minders and their children

5. ROVING PRESCHOOLS

For sparsely populated areas, mainly preschool activity for 5-6-year-olds (maximum 25 children)

6. TWENTY-FOUR HOUR PRESCHOOLS AND PRESCHOOLS OPEN FOR EXTENDED HOURS

For children whose parents work irregular working hours

Preschool staff:
Each preschool group must have at least one preschool teacher and two trained day care nurses or assistants. Each group also has support personnel. The Day Care Act prescribes the number of the staff members; no exceptions are allowed. The same norms apply to private preschools as well. (Children in Finland 1988).

A preschool teacher training course is three years long and the actual training takes place in special preschool teacher training ins-

titutes or in teacher training units at universities. The training organization is currently under reform and in the process of becoming more standardized. After basic training and at least two years practical experience, a preschool teacher can specialize by taking a year-long training course to become a specialized preschool teacher for children with special educational needs. Day care nurses' or assistants' training for preschool work takes 2-and-a-half years.

Despite the fact that preschool teaching has been a profession for quite some time, beginning in the 1800's, the majority of preschool teachers are mostly young; 70% of them are under the age of 32. Most of them are women. There are very few exceptions: only 4% of the preschool teachers in Finland are male (Lastentarha 2/1989). The first male preschool teacher to get his qualifications was only recently, in 1970. Heretofore only women worked in the field. Ten per cent of places available for preschool teacher training have been up until recently reserved for male applicants both to guarantee men a chance to get into the profession and to increase the percentage of male teachers, but from the beginning of this year this quota has been removed for equality reasons. The low professional status as well as the low salary of preschool teachers has also `persuaded' several male teachers to move on to other professions. (Rinne & Jauhiainen 1988, Hänninen & Valli 1986).

1.2.2 The family day care system

Preschool is the basic pillar of the Finnish day care system, but families are offered other alternatives, too. Approximately 16% of all under school-age children are cared for in the municipal family day care system. The municipal family day care minder is allowed to care for no more than four children at the time. The family day care system can be arranged either:

1. at the home of the family day care minder/child minder, which is the most common way, or

2. in so-called three-family-day care where children from two to four different families share a common child minder who cares for all the children in each family's home alternately, or

3. in group family day care where the local authorities provide a place for two to three minders whose day care children are then taken care of in one small group.

The staff for family day care are the family day care minder or child minder and their supervisors. The Day Care Act requires that the person working as a municipal child minder is able to care for children. A basic 250 hour course is the minimum training for municipal child minders. They also receive continuous guidance, support and advice from their supervisors. Family day care supervisors make visits to the family day care homes (minder's home or childrens' home). There are also training sessions for the family day care minders in the area. One supervisor works with at least 30 minders. The supervisors are mostly preschool teachers or have suitable university qualification for the job. They also supervise the activities of private day care employers (Sosiaalihallitus 1988).

Compared with preschool personnel or family day care supervisors the family day care minders usually are older on the average. Most minders begin working when their own children are young. As their children grow up and start school, the minders continue the training required for the job while continuing to care for other children.

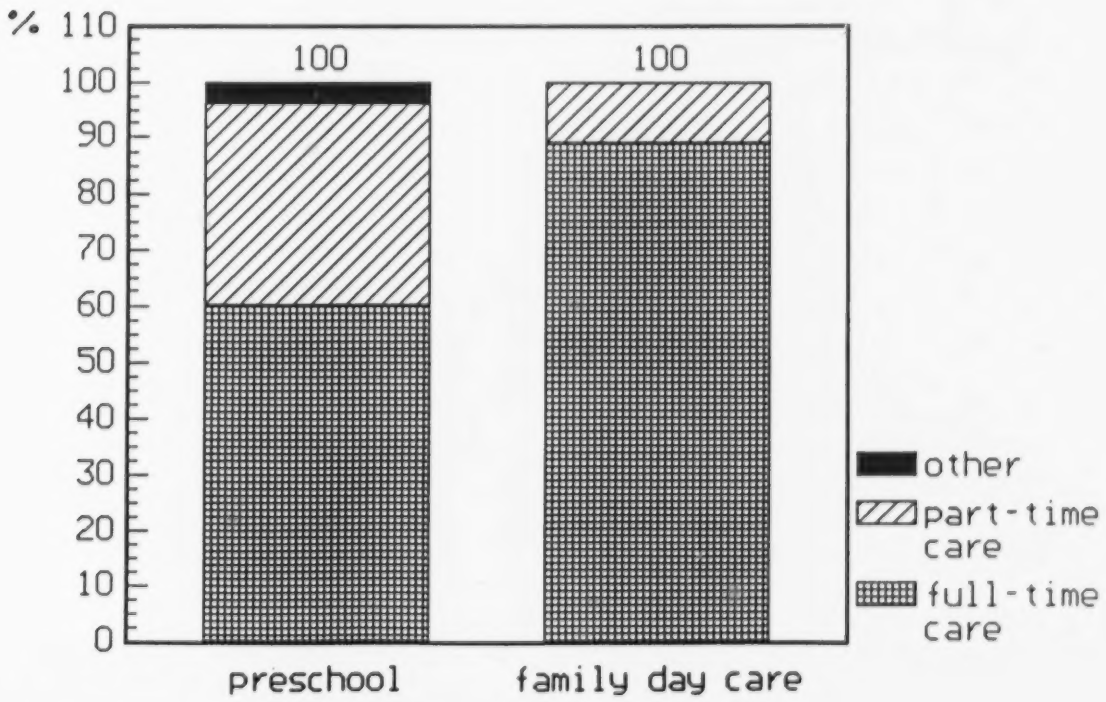
A good deal of family day care is also available in the **private** sector. Private child day care is supervised by the local authorities. In addition, there is guided **play-ground activity** which is also part of the day care system. This type of activity can go on, both all year round, as well as only in the summer and approximately 10% of all under school-age children are in this program. The Finnish Lutheran church also arranges **play groups** that meet two or three times a week, three hours at a time. About 20% of children under school-age participate in these groups. This type of activity is most common in more sparsely populated areas where other kinds of day care facilities are not common.

1.2.3 Day care supply and demand

Even though the Finnish day care system is relatively standardized and well developed compared with other many countries, there are problems. One of them is the lack of sufficient day care facilities. The Day Care Act charges counties to arrange day care for all children who require it, but this goal is not yet fully implemented, especially in bigger towns. In addition, there has been concern about maintaining the quality of day care as many of the quantitative goals are reached.

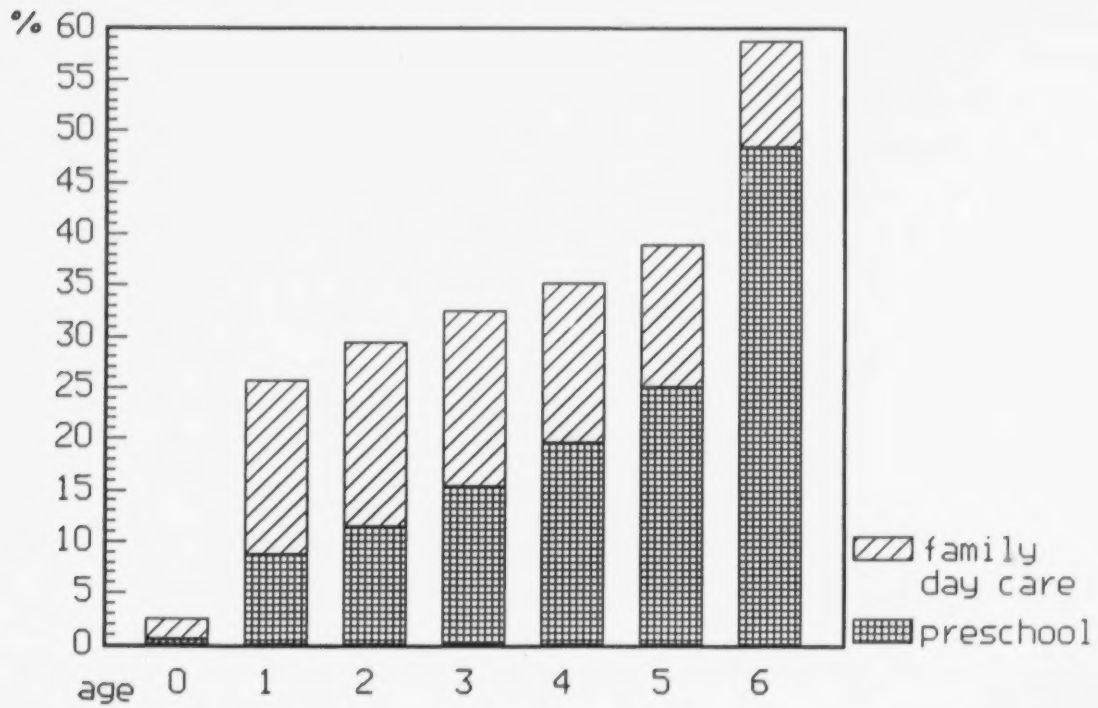
At present the municipal day care places for children are estimated to cover some 80 % of the places totally required. Preschools represent about 51%, being the largest in the various types of day care. Of the preschool places, some 60% are full time, in family day care, 88% (See fig. 2 and 3). The need for day care varies from family to family. The length of the child's day care day is dependent on the parents' working hours. As most Finnish parents work full time, the children have day care long hours, not unusually from 8 to 10 hours a day.

FIGURE 3. Municipal day care places: Full-time care and part-time care in preschools and family day care.



Parents feel that the best place for under three-year-old children to be cared for is their own home where their mothers or fathers take care of them, or in the 'homelike' family day care. (Huttunen & Tamminen 1988). Most of the 1 to 3-year-olds who are taken care of outside their own home are in family day care. From the fourth year preschool becomes the most important form of day care and the importance of family day care lessens. Every fourth five-year-old and every other six-year-old is in a preschool (see fig. 4). In a number of towns, an attempt has been made to insure a preschool place for all children the year before they start school (Lahikainen & Strandell 1988).

FIGURE 4. Preschools and family day care. Percentages in different age groups.



Source: Lahikainen & Strandell 1988, 97.

1.3 THE BASIS OF THE FINNISH DAY CARE EDUCATION

Day care is not separate from the rest of society. On the contrary, day care, its pedagogical models and the growth environment reflect the society where it is established and functions. There are a number of internal and external factors which determine the kind of day care system we have. Such factors are, among others:

1. The official goals

The educational goals of early childhood education in day care have been legislated in the Finnish Parliament. These are the foundation which juridically lays the groundwork for the activities of all the people involved in day care. The report of a special parliamentary committee on day care (Committee Report 1980:31) to stress the importance of upbringing and raising children made the following comments which were subsequently appended to the Day Care Act (304/1983, 2a§):

> "The aim of day care is to support parents in their upbringing tasks and, together with homes, advance the development of a child's well-balanced personality.
> On its own behalf, day care offers children continual, secure, and warm human relations and provides a variety of activities that help develop the child, and a favorable learning environment.
> According to the child's age and individual needs, day care, taking into account general cultural circumstances, should advance the child's physical, social and emotional development as well as support the child's aesthetic, intellectual and religious upbringing. In this task, the religious belief of the child's parents or custodians must be respected.
> In order to advance the development of the child, day care must support the child's growth into responsibility and peace as well as respect for the environment."

2. Traditions

The roots of the Finnish day care pedagogy can be traced to Fröbel's kindergarten pedagogy. The main idea in his educational philosophy was to see the child as a child, acting and playing, learning from his environment. Fröbel's pedagogy was based on the promoting of the total growth of the child. Fröbel also stressed the unique importance of play in the growth and development of the child (Children in Finland 1988).

Finland's hundred-year-old tradition still influences the trends and realities of day care today. A strong tradition gives a feeling of continuity and its justification. However, if the present is solely based on traditions, typically there will be a certain degree of inflexibility and things will be done the same way they have always been done. Regulation of the activities and developments comes from outside and may be irrelevant.

3. Teacher training

It is characteristic of the Finnish day care system that the personnel are qualified, highly educated in their field. Their actions as educators are based upon the skills that they learn while in training: knowledge, skills and attitudes. While in training the personnel learn the theory of day care education as well as the latest research and its applications.

Teacher training, on the other hand, has also played a role in the transfering of the day care tradition on. One can claim that the day care pedagogy is born of and mediated through training. Up to now Fröbel's theories of pedagogy have influenced both the contents and organization of the Finnish day care system, but one could ask if this indeed is sufficient to meet the situations of today's children and their families, or the demands of the future early childhood education.

The teachers of the day care personnel themselves are in a keyposition. It is very common in Finland that the teachers are also active in researching the day care system itself, which in turn helps to put the latest research and findings into practice. In addition to this, personnel working in the day care system are continuously receiving training and guidance from courses arranged both by the day care administration and by universities. The right to participate in in-service training is stipulated by law. In this way the staff are able to keep abreast of the latest developments and refresh their working knowledge.

4. The parents' expectations and demands

In order for the day care system to realize full potential in supporting the child's home upbringing requires that the parents clearly express their expectations regarding day care. To implement this the day care system must familiarize itself with the background and needs of the children and their families. The parents are in the best position to know their own children and family situations, so their views must be taken into consideration in the planning and developing of day care activities. Actually, finally the parents are the system's employers and their children the customers.

Most of the parents whose children are in preschools think that the most important aim of preschool education is the social education of the children and teaching them skills in interaction together with other children and adults. Those parents whose children are in family day care emphasize emotional education, that is that the child feels secure, learns to respect other people and feels accepted as a person. In order for the education to be consistent, it is important that the day care staff and the parents have similar educational aims.

The emphasis on the emotional aspect in family day care indicates the general opinion that family day care is especially suitable for younger children whose basic need for security is essential. The social aspect of preschool education is in conformity with that of earlier studies. Parents expect their children to learn the basics of social interaction as well as having friends their own age to play with in preschools. According to a Swedish study (Andersson 1985) the parents emphasize that the children should feel that their preschool is fun and a place where they can play freely.

5. The personality and social background of the educator

The way a person is brought up is reflected naturally in their choosing the job as an early childhood educator, as well as the work itself. Finnish educational tradition has long been grounded in demands of obedience and respect of the authority. With the changing of society its ideas and norms about education are also changing. Today's educators must bring up children in a very different way from the one

in which they were brought up (Lahikainen & Strandell 1988).

The following personality features have been found to be common among day care personnel, especially the preschool teachers: balance, interest in children and people in general, spontaniety and creativity. However scientific or theoretical interests and ambition have been found to be relatively unimportant to day care staff as compared to other professional groups. Quite a few of the characteristics associated with preschool teachers are the same as those that are associated with the general concept of a "good person". These characteristics in themselves are not a guarantee of the quality of activity and work of a preschool teacher. Above all else, the educator must be interested in and motivated to work with small children because one's interest in the job increases one's ability to do well in it. (Ojala 1983).

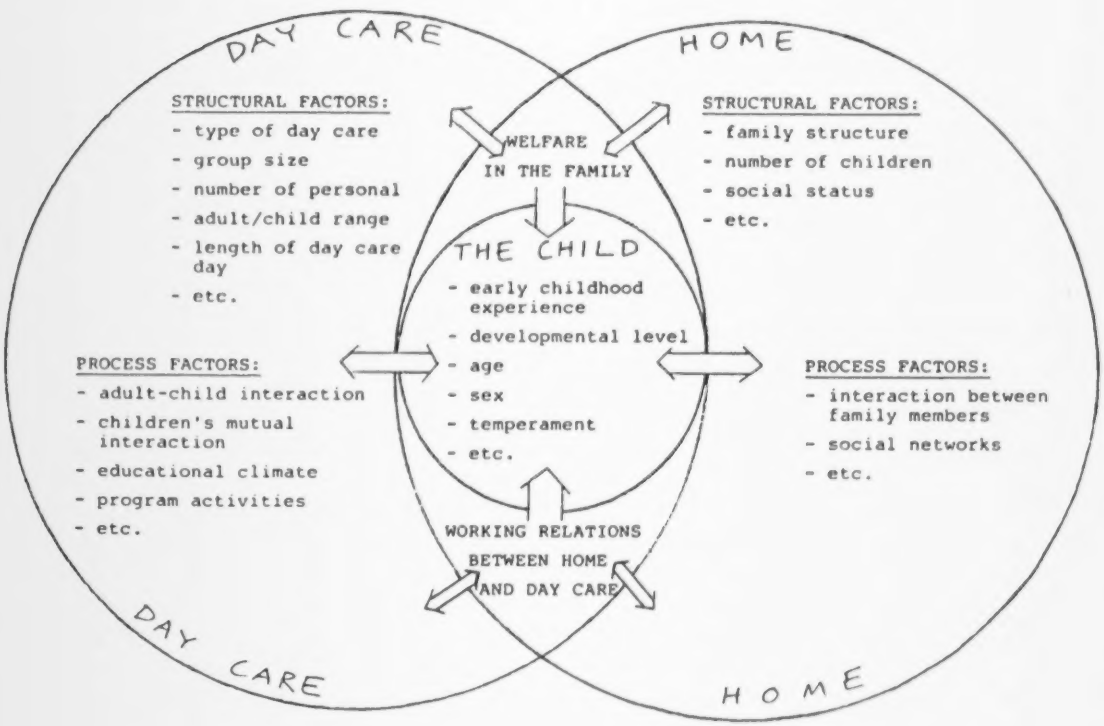
All the above mentioned elements are relevant to day care. If education is not seen as part of life it remains separate from it and will be seen as a series of gimmicks which have no relevance to the child's reality. The better education can meet the challenges of today's world the better it can act as an instructive force in society. Education should be a living force and able to adapt to the challenges of a changing society. Similarly, in the educator's work his or her attitude toward change is essential. Education cannot be based solely on the one role as educator, but the educator himself must live and change with the educational process.

1.4 ECOLOGICAL VIEWS IN DAY CARE EDUCATION

As mentioned before, one important aspect of day care goals is the supporting of the homes in their bringing up children and the cooperation between the homes and day care. One of the factors in the background is the rise of ecological educational psychology as a new theoretical orientation. Bronfenbrenner (1979) has played a key role in the development of this ecological view. According to his theory the individual psychological foundation is no more emphasized but has given way to the view that education is a cooperative process among all the people who are involved with it. The child develops while interacting in his environment and acts simultaneously in several refe-

rence groups. The child's possibilities for optimal growth and development are to a great extent dependent on how much the parents and other adults working with the child cooperate with each other.In a day care situation both the quality of the day care and the families as children's growth environments should be influenced. In the upbringing of children the whole environment the child lives in should be taken into consideration. In the following figure the essential elements in the ecological environment and their relationships are portrayed from the points of view of the child, the family and day care. (Huttunen 1984).

FIGURE 5. The child, family and day care in the light of ecological educational theory.



From the child's point of view the central microsystems are the home and family as well as day care and friends. In order for education to be successful it is vital, according to the ecological theory, that there is cooperation between the child's growth environments, in other words within the mesosystem. New and unique to the ecological educational orientation is the stress on the importance of coopera-

tion between the educators. Cooperation and interaction between people creates so-called social networks. Parents working and cooperating together create a kind of social network where they both receive support and are able to better carry out their educational tasks much in the same way as educators cooperate between themselves. The support that parents receive from cooperation and interaction is conveyed both on formal and informal levels. The formal level is support that comes from the day care system itself, while the informal level emphasized by the ecological view comes from parents freely working together in their educational work. This can come about as a result of the formal cooperation instigated by the day care system, such as a parent-teacher meeting where parents interact among themselves and maintain the interaction freely, on their own initiative.

The aim of day care education is to support the educational task of the home. The only way this can be carried out is to first note the home back-grounds and the needs of the families. It must be accepted that the parents are the experts regarding their own child and their voice must be heard. The parents are responsible for the education of their children. Because of this responsibility they have both the right and duty to influence day care education, as well.

2. THE CHILD BEHAVIOR AND GROWTH ENVIRONMENT

2.1 THE CARRYING OUT OF THE RESEARCH

The study, **"Family and day care as a growth environments"** (Huttunen 1988, 1989a), is a study assessing day care in Finland with a view to improve the quality of the Finnish day care system. Many of the statements made in this paper are based on the above mentioned research project. It surveyed the extent to which the family works together with the day care system as an educational environment in a child's life. The views and feelings of both parents and day care personnel, as well as those of children, were compared and an effort was made to really consider the views of parents who naturally are experts in matters of the day care, as well as the actual day care customers, their children.

The research group was a representative national sample of 721 children in day care. Personnel in both preschools and family day care and the parents assessed the children's education in a questionnaire form. In addition, 1200 school children were encouraged to write an essay about their own experiences in day care and about what they felt would have been ideal day care. The pupils were from 8 to 12 years old and came from all over Finland.

2.2 PARENTS' VIEW OF DAY CARE

The research showed that families had a very positive attitude towards day care. Only 6% of the families were doubtful as to present day care being a functional part of the whole family situation. Parents in the southern part of the country were more dissatisfied, which could be explained by the fact that the greatest inadequacies in qualified personnel and day care places are in southern Finland. Other problems related to the urban life-style in the Helsinki area, such as a higher level of stress, housing problems, lack of social contacts, etc., may also be reflected in the negative attitudes the families had about day care. All in all, families with children felt that a workable, functioning day care system was part of a satisfactory life-style.

The parents had numerous wishes and constructive suggestions for further developing the day care system and education. Although the experiences and information parents had regarding day care varied considerably, they nonetheless were quite similar to those their children had. The feelings of both the parents and the children were naturally very subjective, but very real for them. The parent's own views about day care are very important and should be seen as positive from the point of view of furthering day care development. Day care must be integrated into family life on the families' terms, and not be imposed upon them from on high.

In the study the parents evaluated their own satisfaction with the day care education. The categories were: guided activities and play, children's mutual free play, basic care (eating, sleeping, outing, etc.) and day care rules, as well as the individual treatment of the child. (See table 1).

TABLE 1. How satisfied the parents of preschool children (ps=424) and amily day care children (fdc=191) were with the various forms of day care activity (%)

ACTIVITY	VERY SATISFIED		SATISFIED/ RATHER SATISFIED		DISSATISFIED/ RATHER DIS-SATISFIED		TOTAL
	ps	fdc	ps	fdc	ps	fdc	
Guided activities	47	32	52	68	1	-	100
Free play	20	23	79	76	1	1	100
Outing	33	53	65	47	2	-	100
Eating	49	58	51	42	-	-	100
Sleeping	25	49	66	47	9	4	100
Rules	28	34	71	64	1	2	100
Individual treatment	16	33	76	65	8	2	100

On the whole parents were more satisfied with the education in family day care than in preschool. Especially basic care and individual treatment of the children were the main basis for satisfaction with family day care. On the other hand, the preschool children's parents were more satisfied with the guided play and activity periods than the parents whose children were in family day care. It seems so that family day care parents would like more of that type of activity.

Even though the parents generally were satisfied with the way their children were educated in day care, they had criticisms about some of the practices in the day care education. They were not able to focus their satisfaction with specifics within the framework of the day care education, but rather felt satisfaction with the nature of day care education in general.

1. Most of the parents liked the day care personnel best. Parents of preschool children expressed their satisfaction stressing competence, reliability and suitability for educational work of the day care staff.

"...I trust the day care personnel in every respect..."
"...the day care staff are really first-class, and children sense that they are accepted..."
"...games, arts and crafts are most important for our child right now and there are excellent teachers for this type of activity in preschool.."

Parents of children in family day care liked the good relationships between the minders and their children and themselves. Often the background underlying reason behind this good cooperation was similar views held by parents and minders concerning care and education.

"...our child's minder is very calm by nature, we can talk to her, she listens to our points of view..."
"the best possible minder...is tender and yet firm...children love her and her family very much."
"...the way of looking at things and the educational goals at the day care are the same as at home...good care, not too 'institutional'..."

2. The second general area of satisfaction was that the parents felt that their **children liked it at the day care and had a positive attitude toward it.** The preschool children's parents especially valued the fact that the preschool worked toward promoting the children's development. This could also be seen, according to some of the parents, from the progress of their children made in various practical skills.

"...our child likes preschool, has found new friends, likes the food, teachers seem nice, are good at guiding the children and keeping order. Good excursions..."
"...our child likes to tell about what happened everyday and is enthusiastic about going to preschool..."
"...our child likes it there and has initiative and learns to get along with others...has a chance to get rid of extra energy as there is so much activity...he learns and develops..."

A lot of parents whose children were in family day care emphasized that when the child was happy with his day care, parents should be happy, too.

> "...our child says he likes it and...that's important..."
> "...you can see how satisfied he is from his attitude about day care...he seems eager to start playing there...he likes it there..."

3. Parents thirdly, were pleased with the **nature of day care education.** A number of parents satisfied with preschool education regarded the preschool positively in all respects. They were happy with the preschool educational scope and goals; they felt they were getting support for their own educational work as parents. The parents whose children were in small preschools were especially pleased. They believed that the small size of the preschool was the reason for good relationships between the adults and flexibility in care.

> "...the preschool is small, the teachers are on familiar terms with the parents, our child's friends and their parents know us and we know them..."
> "...the preschool is fairly small. Children of different age groups play together. Our children spent their whole time in preschool together, they were not arbitrarily, or otherwise, separated..."
> "...the staff has pretty much remained the same...our child has been allowed to be in the same preschool the whole time..."
> "...being a single parent I need all the support and advice from outside I can get because I can make mistakes without noticing them and think my child is a little adult and act accordingly..."

The parents were happy with the family day care because of its activities and the individual way it treats both children and families, as well as its versatile programs.

"...the children were often held in the minder's lap and they are read to a lot..."
"...our child was in the same day care place with her brother and her sisters very near home..."
"...in a small group our child receives individual treatment and likes it a great deal..."

The factors behind parents' satisfaction show that these two types of day care, preschool and family day care, are considered clearly different in nature. The views of both parents and day care personnel regarding the importance of educational aims demonstrates clearly that there are different expectations and wishes set for education in a preschool and in family day care.

2.3 THE CHILD'S VIEW OF DAY CARE

In public discussions about day care, the children and their values have often been left in the background. Adult views have been prominent in discussions. The quality of children's daily life is in question when we are dealing with day care. To the children, day care is real life. Thus any assessment of day care education should have as its point of departure the children's views.

The children themselves felt that it was fun to be at day care when they could be with friends and play. The most positive image from their standpoint had to do with the educators. The personnel was regarded with warmth. But children also remember when adults get angry and raise their voices, even though most of the time the children felt it was necessary. On the whole the day care educators were considered to be skillful, capable and most of all nice, by the children.

"...my minder was nice. She got angry sometimes,but calmed down pretty quickly and she knew how to be strict at the right times..."
"...the teachers were really nice. They could think of all kinds of fun both indoors and outside..."
"...day care people liked to play, were friendly and strict when they had to be..."

In addition to remembering their educators, **friends and playtime** made for fond memories of day care.

> "...I remember my preschool friends best, they were friendly, honest and fun..."
> "...my friends were nice, we always played together..."

In a negative light the children remembered **the strict schedules**. They would say "we had to do this..." or "they made us do that...".

> "...it wasn't any fun when we wanted to play one thing and the teachers said that now we had to play with Legos and we didn't want to..."
> "...I didn't like when there was too little free time..."

The absolutely most negative memory of day care had to do with **nap time**.

> "...The worst was resting, I couldn't sleep there. But even though sleeping was boring it wasn't all bad: one teacher read to us during the nap-time..."
> "...it was boring...we had to sleep three hours..."
> "...it was boring when they made us have nap-time even though we wanted to play..."

Free play remained as a more positive image in the children's minds than the guided activities arranged by the teachers. Other times such as when **stories** were told or read were remembered as exceptionally positive moments by the children. The reading of nap time stories was felt to be the only redeeming virtue of the otherwise much disdained sleep time.

> "...usually Sirpa had a little story time when she read us a book or told stories from her own memory..."
> "...Nap time was boring in the preschool, it was too long, but I did like the stories they read..."

Different **chores and excursions** were remembered as positive memories of the activity sector.

"...We got to bake sweet-bread ourselves..."
"...then we ate and someone got to help out in the kitchen. He helped cook and serve food to the others..."
"...we went on outings, it was fun. We played tag and hide-and-seek. We ate cookies and drank juice..."

All in all the children's memories of day care are, in the main, positive.

"...I had so much fun at the preschool and when mom came to pick me up I didn't want to go and sometimes I even started to cry..."
"...Nothing was really boring in preschool and almost everything was fun..."

The children were also allowed to describe "ideal" day care as well as their own experiences. The following example illustrates how an 11-year-old girl envisions "ideal" day care:

"I think the day care center should be cozy and there should be enough stuff to do. The kids should be allowed to play freely but also together. You could go out or come in if you want, in ideal day care. Everyone would have at least one friend in ideal day care, but you could also be alone if you wanted. Around midday we would have to eat. Everyone should get enough food. If something didn't taste so good, you would't have to eat it, except a little so that no one would stay hungry. Everyone who wanted and was used to sleeping could sleep in day care too. The others would have to be quiet then, perhaps they could be outside. Everyone could sleep as long as they wanted to. In ideal day care no one would have to do anything. The teachers should watch and make sure that no one got hurt and that the kids wouldn't fight a lot and no one teased anyone. The kids should have fun in day care and all should be treated equal."

2.4 DOES DAY CARE MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

Early education as part of social reality is in the state of change. The most central factor in early education, the family, has not lost its position, quite the contrary. Day care as an important factor in early education supports and fulfills the work the home does in early education. The demands on early education have continuously increased. This requires us to have the courage to appraise education from points of view other than traditional ones.

2.4.1 The realities of day care from the staff's point of view

In the day-to-day running of day care, many educators expressed contradictory feelings between how they would like to do things and how things are actually done in practice.

1. When the preschool **groups are too large** and understaffed the adults feel that they are mainly just watching the children and responsible to be in control. In times like this adults tend to feel that they have too little time or opportunity to give individual attention to the children. Under pressures such as these, situations can develop where true child-oriented education remains only an ideal. The situation might be so bad that one adult alone could be responsible for a group that numbers up to 20 children between the ages of 3 and 6.

2. Another kind of conflict arises when the skills and practice received in **training** meets the everyday reality which dictates the conditions of day care and the childrens' lives. Some of the staff have made the observation that unfortunately, a lot of children are from homes that can't encourage the children's emotional growth, and the staff then has had to help them in that sector, whereas the staff's training emphasized giving the children the intellectual stimuli which these children seem to need less of. The personnel have felt that they are not well enough equipped to deal with the children which need this type of special care and protection. From this viewpoint it is understandable that the staff often feel that the present day care system was designed for balanced children that come from balanced homes (Huttunen 1988).

3. There are certain various **role expectations** among the day care educators themselves, differences between how they perceive the children under their care and the education they are supposed to mete out. Under circumstances such as these new ideas and thoughts can be threatening. Resistance towards new ideas can crop up and it can become difficult to accept changes in the system.

Those in charge of the day care staff and other administrative officials likewise have their own expectations regarding the educators. These expectations arising from their administrative perspective can

be at loggerheads with the views of the day care personnel. For example, the administrative views on enlarging the sizes of the child groups stem from the administrator's understanding of the staff's role as merely watching and controlling the children, whereas the staff see their role as being based on the children's needs and emphasize the importance of their roles as educators rather than shepherds or guards.

4. At present most conflicts probably stem from the **continual pressures for change as well as pressures from the parents**, which can be experienced as quite threatening. The problems come from not knowing to what extent day care education should work independently in its own sphere and to what extent the views and desires of the parents should be heeded in the practical functioning of day care education. In principle active, interested parents are considered a very positive thing, but if these parents are critical of standard operating procedures, friction and anxiety can result, even to the extent of undermining the whole foundation of day care.

In the study **day care personnel** were often more critical in their attitudes toward day care than were parents. According to the staff some 11% of the children were such that they doubted the present day care system's ability to deal with them properly. The staff felt that the present day care education was better suited to girls than boys and likewise better for 5 to 6-year-olds than younger children. This doesn't mean, however, that the importance or value of day care for the children and their families or the whole of society should be considered in question. Though this result does give rise to one question, namely that on whose terms day care education could be said to be based, could it be true that day care personnel, being mostly female themselves, are able to cater to the girls' needs better than the boys'? Could it be argued that planned activities were more on the girls' than the boys' terms? Does a female majority in day care mean feminine dominance in behavior and that day care education is more feminine in its nature? Is it felt that the qualities of conscientiousness, a "Pollyanna nature" and quietness, which school education also favors and which are characteristic of little girls, those which should be inculcated in education?

The suitability of day care education for older children rather than the younger ones perhaps stems from the historical background of day care. Traditionally, day care education was considered as part-time activity for preschoolers. Thus the planning of the activities developed from this principle. One element in the girls and preschoolers suitability for day care in general may arise from the over-emphasis on activity periods during the day. The study showed that boys were especially irritated by the adult-supervised activities. It would seem that the traditional guided activity-centered model of day care as a form of intermittent stimulus still haunts day care education planning.

Does planning actually work on the terms of the day care system? It is held that the measure for the effectiveness of day care is more on the basis of how well the child adapts to day care rather than how well day care adjusts to the needs of the child. However, moving into the 1990's, day care as a social service to families must be perceived as more than just a system of stimulative periods of activity. This will have to be evident both in day care pedagogy and in the behavior of the adults and the children.

2.4.2 The strengths of day care

From the points of view of both the parents and the children, the central strengths of the day care system are its educators, the relationships among the children, and their play activities. These are the cornerstones of pedagogy through which the educational aims of day care can be realized.

1. The educators

Research has shown that the most important factor in day care education are the educators. The success or failure of day care education is dependent on their personality, their relationships to the children and to education. These factors are much more important than the contents of any educational program or carefully laid out plans. The main instrument of the educators are their own personality, the genuineness of which is based on the principle of "honesty to oneself". The educators must trust themselves, their skills and capabilities. From this self-assurance will also arise trust in other people, tole-

rance and the ability to value differing points of view and opinions. Here in also lies the basis for successful cooperation with the parents. The children's parents trust the day care educators and feel that they are professional and well suited for their job. Even more important is the fact that the children remember their early educators with warmth (Huttunen 1988, 1989a).

2. Children and their peers

The day care system's second resource can be defined as the social relationships between the children, the peer group itself as an agent of socialization. The average size of the Finnish family is shrinking and likewise the people's social networks. For children, day care offers "brothers and sisters" and the opportunity to learn to live together, to learn the social talents which is how humans develop their humanity. How- ever, the views of those at the administrative level of day care, regarding just how many "brothers and sisters" a child should have sometimes go to extemes. There are no pedagogical grounds for having groups as large as those now found in Finnish preschools. In fact,large groups trying to teach social behavior become selfdefeating in their purposes. Research has shown that children are overburdened by an overly great number of social relationships (Niiranen 1987). It is also very trying for the educators to keep up with such oversized groups. In any case, a peer group for a toddler-preschooler is very important in the development of his or her own identity.

3. Play

Day care's third resource is play. In day care the children learn about life and get acquainted with the world on a child's level through playing. In play children can find their own place in the community and can "test" their abilities in their relations with other children. Nothing is as valuable as play for a child. Play is the basis of day care pedagogy and the staff are well trained to help the children realize their potential in play.

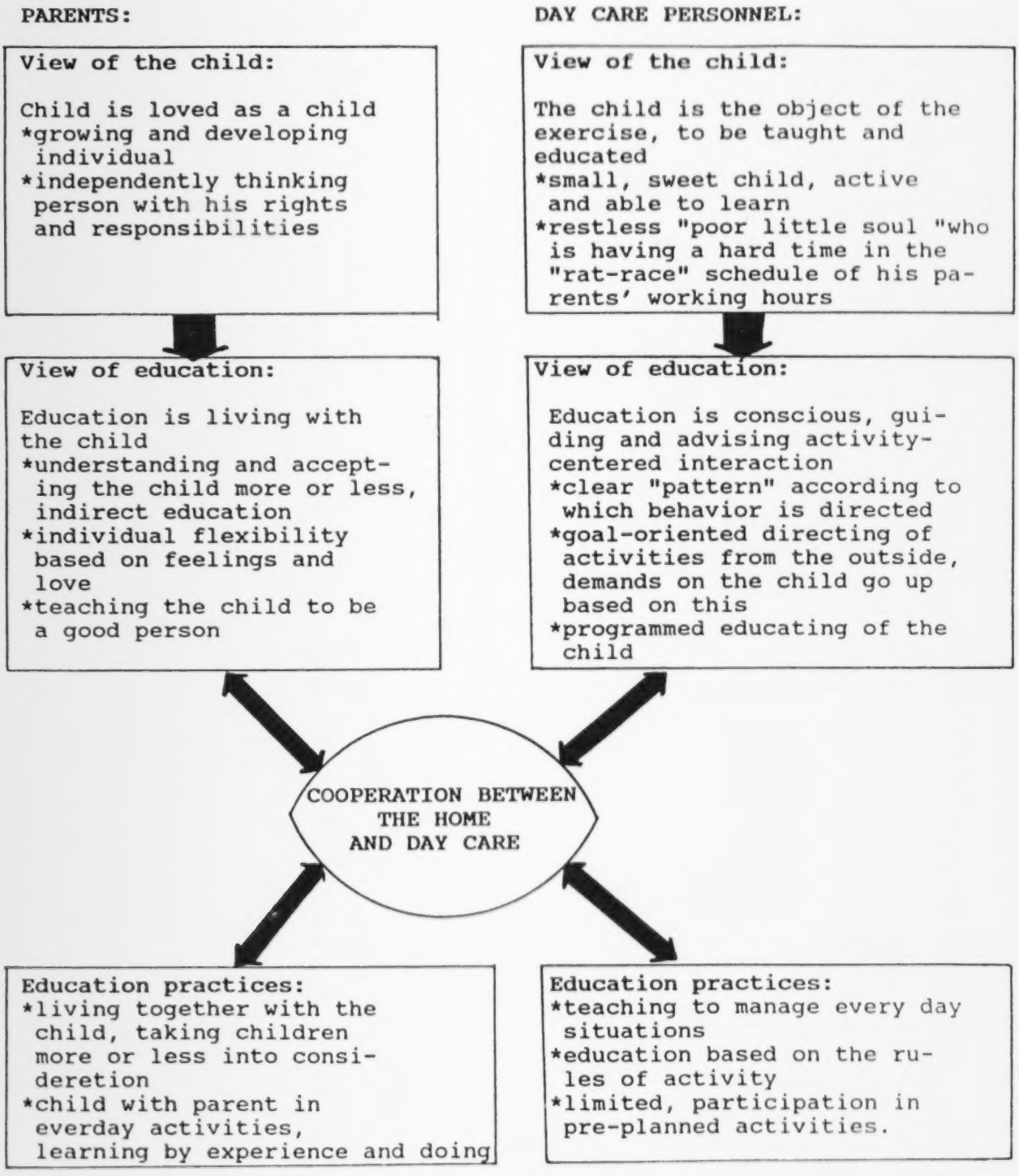
3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF DAY CARE

Both day care staff and the parents alike feel that the nature of education in preschools and family day care are different. However, the main guarantee for quality day care in both forms of day care is the educator. The starting-point for developing day care further should be in underlying, distinctive characteristics which both types of day care, preschool and family day care each have to offer, which are recognized by both parents and staff as being important. Family day care should not be molded in the same form as preschool day care. The use of child group in preschool education as a pedagogical resource is possible, whereas this is not nearly at all as possible in family day care.

Cooperation in education

Early childhood education theory integrating the home and day care education, culminates in the cooperation of the home and day care (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 1986, Huttunen 1984). The basis for this question is how we perceive the child and childhood. Following this there is the question of what the child needs and our understanding of the potential of education. Educational practice at home and day care are to a great extent dependent on these perceived definitions of childhood and education. The following figure is the summation of the latest Finnish evaluative research on the views of education and practices and the differences between them, at home and in day care (mostly preschool), (Huttunen 1988, Huttunen & Tamminen 1988, and Lahikainen & Strandell 1988).

FIGURE 6. Early childhood education in the family and day care (Huttunen 1989b)


PARENTS:
View of the child:
Child is loved as a child
*growing and developing individual
*independently thinking person with his rights and responsibilities
View of education:
Education is living with the child
*understanding and accepting the child more or less, indirect education
*individual flexibility based on feelings and love
*teaching the child to be a good person
Education practices:
*living together with the child, taking children more or less into consideretion
*child with parent in everday activities, learning by experience and doing
DAY CARE PERSONNEL:
View of the child:
The child is the object of the exercise, to be taught and educated
*small, sweet child, active and able to learn
*restless "poor little soul "who is having a hard time in the "rat-race" schedule of his parents' working hours
View of education:
Education is conscious, guiding and advising activity-centered interaction
*clear "pattern" according to which behavior is directed
*goal-oriented directing of activities from the outside, demands on the child go up based on this
*programmed educating of the child
Education practices:
*teaching to manage every day situations
*education based on the rules of activity
*limited, participation in pre-planned activities.
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE HOME AND DAY CARE

The success of the cooperation between the home and day care can be seen in the developing of educational practices both in the home and in day care. The professionalism and the quality of day care personnel is evident in the level of integration of the home and day care education. Day care assumes that its personnel, besides being competent in early education, have also mastered those skills necessary to understand the social and political reality wherein children and their families live in order to be able to deal with the child and his background and behavior. This is the basis for the individual education of the child in day care. And that is what the parents most expect from the present day care system.

There should be an attempt made to search more courageously than at the present time, for a new social-pedagogical tradition based on the realities of life and the needs of today's children and families, as well as the present day and future tasks of day care. The new vision of day care anticipated is the efficient cooperation between those institutions which, on the one hand support the family, and on the other, the children with their parents themselves. All in all it is based on taking total responsibility for the well-being of children in their early childhood. The present day challenge of day care is the meeting of social problems and handling them on an educational level. The quality of day care lies on the fact that it really meets the needs of its customers, the children and their families. In the long run the quality of day care is not reflected in children's developmental level or the high scores they may get in achievement tests, because these differences, according to research, even out during the first years of school. **The quality of day care can be seen, however, in the children's own opinion of themselves, the type of self-image and self-assurance day care develops in children.** This is the kind of influence that is more enduring and results in positive social interaction between the educator and the child.

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